

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5414
INFO AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

CONFIDENTIAL JAKARTA 16414

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ID
SUBJECT: SINAR HARAPAN EDITOR DISCUSSES POLITICAL DETAINEES

REF: JAKARTA 13(53)

1. RESPECTED SINAR HARAPAN EDITOR SABAM SIAGIAN SPOKE TO SOME 40 MEMBERS OF THE JAKARTA DIPLOMATIC CLUB DECEMBER 6 ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS SEPTEMBER VISITS TO VARIOUS DETENTION CENTERS WHERE POLITICAL DETAINEES ARE HELD, INCLUDING BURU ISLAND. HIS REMARKS GENERALLY FOLLOWED HIS EARLIER COMMENTS REPORTED IN REFTEL, INCLUDING STATEMENTS THAT CONDITIONS FOR DETAINEES ARE BETTER FOR THOSE ON BURU THAN FOR THOSE ON JAVA; THE GOVERNMENT'S STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF DETAINEES ARE BASICALLY ACCURATE; RESETTLEMENT CENTERS OFFER A GENUINE CHANCE FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR RELEASED DETAINEES, BUT THEY REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO BE EFFECTIVE; AND THAT WHILE GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE SINCERE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE DETAINEE PROBLEM THEIR POLICIES ARE CARRIED OUT BY SUBORDINATES WHO ARE OFTEN IGNORANT AND INEFFICIENT.

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2. SABAM SURPRISED HIS AUDIENCE, HOWEVER, WITH HIS ESTIMATE THAT 40 PERCENT OF THE POLITICAL DETAINEES ARE FORMER MILITARY MEN. THEY ARE DETAINED TOGETHER WITH CIVILIANS, HE SAID, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER GIVEN A CIVILIAN/MILITARY BREAKDOWN IN ITS STATISTICS FOR FEAR IT MIGHT RAISE DOUBTS ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF THE ARMED FORCES.
(COMMENT: WE DO NOT YET HAVE ANY FACTUAL DATA BY WHICH TO

JUDGE THIS ESTIMATE.)

3. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF GOI INTENTIONS TO RELEASE THE DETAINEES ON SCHEDULE AND THE EXTENT OF FOREIGN PRESSURE INVOLVED, SABAM STRONGLY AFFIRMED THAT THIS WAS AN INDONESIAN PROBLEM WHICH NEEDED AN INDONESIAN SOLUTION. HE NOTED LOCAL EFFORTS BY CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM GROUPS TO ASSIST THE DETAINEES AND WORK FOR THEIR RELEASE, AND WARNED THAT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE WAS NEITHER HELPFUL NOR WELL RECEIVED BY INDONESIANS. FOREIGNERS SHOULD BE AWARE, SAID SABAM, THAT THE FEELING EPITOMIZED BY SUKARNO'S REMARK "GO TO HELL WITH YOUR AID" IS NOT FAR UNDER THE SURFACE OF INDONESIAN THINKING, AND THIS TIME INDONESIA CAN BETTER AFFORD TO MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT.

MASTERS

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